



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

**Gippsland Electorate: Mardan
Hall Centenary Celebration**

SPEECH

Thursday, 1 November 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Thursday, 1 November 2012
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Questioner
Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (09:54): Jane Ross, a craftswoman of great ability who writes so beautifully, wrote about the Mardan Hall centenary celebration:

In its glory days, 400 people would dance the night away at balls at the Mardan hall.

Sometimes there were two orchestras, one at either end of the room—

I know, Deputy Speaker, you are identifying with everything I am saying at the moment, because you know country communities like I do. She continued:

When the first took a break, the other band would start up providing continuous music. At 3.00 a.m., revellers would retrieve their horse and cart and travel home ... this could be many miles away.

This little country hall has retained its place at the heart of the Mardan community, and on 27 October it celebrated its 100th birthday. I was there as one of the participants.

Built in 1912, the hall was used for meetings and celebrations such as weddings and birthdays, but during the war years the hall had a more sober duty. During those years, it was the place to farewell and welcome home local soldiers. Since then it has been used as a public library and for indoor bowls. The grand old hall, the cornerstone of a proud community stands as a testament to all those who have come before—the people who through wars, depressions, droughts and Gippsland's long, cold wet winters saw the potential of the fertile farming land in the area in which the hall is built.

Mr Mackey MP, a member of the state government at the time, was meant to open the hall on the day in 1912, but government business kept him in Melbourne. In his place, he sent his wife to open the hall. Mrs Mackey was apparently very, very impressed with the country hospitality and the spread laid out—which I might say was just as good last weekend. The ladies of the Red Cross catered—and put some weight on me! Ms Ross went on to say:

When the hall was opened a bevy of white-clad women served a sumptuous banquet. Timed for 5.00 p.m. and peppered with many toasts, it was all cleared away by 8 for a night of dancing.

Congratulations to Committee President Robert Gray, who emceed and spoke at the end of the night, and Faye Marshman and Karen Anton, who did an enormous amount of work, along with the rest of the community.

My lovely staff member writes here, 'Oh, if those hall walls could speak.' Well, something wonderful happened. There was a singer to sing our national anthem, and he had bemoaned to me the fact that we were not singing *God Save the Queen*. When the piano accordionist came up, I whispered in his ear, 'After we finish the national anthem, we're going to sing *God Save the Queen* as a surprise to the singer.' The hall shook and trembled as we began to sing, 'God save our gracious Queen,' and everybody felt it was just like that moment in 1912!